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# Environmental Justice: A Growing Union

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## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: A GROWING UNION

The 1960s and early 70s were a time of great social change in the United States—a time when more people became involved in various social movements ranging from equal rights for minorities and women, to freedom of speech and association, and of course, the environmental movement. For a number of years, most of these movements functioned independently, each dealing with its own problems and each trying separately to overcome the numerous hurdles encountered in their struggles.

A recent trend, however, has seen the union of at least two of these movements—the civil rights movement and the environmental movement. Until the 1980s, these movements ran on separate tracks with environmentalists concentrating on conserving the land, air, and water and civil rights advocates directing their energy toward securing rights for people. Currently though, a strong alliance has been forming between the environmental and civil rights communities. Known first as the “environmental racism” movement and later as the “environmental justice” movement, this union is intended to “find remedies for a problem that has become clear in its glaring inequity: minority and poor communities bear a disproportionate burden of the nation’s environmental hazards.”<sup>1</sup> The essays that follow are a result of this new

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1. Steven Keeva, *A Breath of Justice*, A.B.A. J., Feb. 1994, at 88. Hope Babcock, an environmental law professor at Georgetown University Law Center, has explained that things did not start smoothly when the environmental bar and civil rights bar first began to work together at the ABA’s first environmental justice program in May 1992:

Mostly, the civil rights bar was screaming at the white environmental bar, saying, ‘Where have you been? We’ve been doing this work since Martin Luther King came down to Memphis to march for the striking garbage workers.’

Then the environmental bar, being touchy-feely ‘60s types, were saying, ‘Oh, please don’t say that; we’re not racists, we’re not bigoted, we really want to work with you, but you’ve got to understand that this is a complicated field and we really understand it.’ By the end of the conference, we had all of these people

union and represent the creative and insightful analysis that arises when a diverse group of legal scholars focuses on the relationship between environmental law and people.

Finally, the *West Virginia Law Review* would like to extend special thanks to Professor Pat McGinley. Without his help and guidance, this symposium of essays would not have been possible. By incorporating environmental justice into his own environmental law class, he has forced us to challenge our traditional definitions of environmental law, and in turn, expand our way of looking at all areas of the law. Thus, Professor McGinley has accomplished the one true goal of teaching—he has managed to make his students think.

*John Douglas Moore*  
Editor-in-Chief

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working together, coming up with a list of initiatives where the [different] bars could work in harmony.

*Id.* at 91.